

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 4764

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT - PARA 1 LINE 1)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT NL
SUBJECT: RECONVENED PARLIAMENT FACES IMPORTANT ECONOMIC DEBATE

1. AFTER A POLITICALLY UNEVENTFUL SUMMER, THE DUTCH PARLIA-
MENT RECONVENES AUGUST 29. DURING THE NEXT THREE WEEKS,
UNTIL THE QUEEN'S SPEECH AND THE PRESENTATION OF THE 1979
BUDGET ON SEPTEMBER 19, A FEW LEFT-OVER ITEMS FROM THE
SPING SESSION WILL BE DISCUSSED. IN THE MEANTIME,
POLITICAL PARTIES AND INTEREST GROUPS WILL BE GEARING
UP FOR THE MAJOR ACTION - THE BUDGET DEBATES WHICH ARE
LIKELY TO BEGIN AROUND THE FIRST OF OCTOBER. THE PARTIES
HAVE JUST BEGUN TO SPAR WITH EACH OTHER, AND ONLY THE
BROAD OUTLINES OF THEIR POSITIONS ON THE GOVERNMENT'S
SPENDING PLANS ARE YET KNOWN (OR, PERHAPS, EVEN FORMULATED).

2. ALTHOUGH MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND GROUPS AGREE
THAT THE GROWTH OF GOVERNMENT SPENDING HAS TO BE LIMITED,
SHARP DIFFERENCES REMAIN OVER THE DEGREE OF BUDGET PRUNING
AND THE PROGRAMS WHICH SHOULD BE CUT. NOT ONLY IS THE
OPPOSITION LABOR PARTY (PVDA) AT ODDS WITH THE GOVERNMENT
PROPOSALS, WHICH IS TO BE EXPECTED, BUT ALSO THE
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PARLIAMENTARY FACTION OF THE MAJOR GOVERNMENT COALITION
PARTNER, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (CDA), HAS ALREADY ANNOUNCED
THAT IT WILL SEEK TO MODIFY THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS.
ON THE OTHER HAND, THE JUNIOR COALITION PARTNER LIBERAL PARTY
(VVD) HAS LET IT BE KNOWN THAT IT WILL FIGHT ANY REDUCTION IN
THE AMOUNT OF CUTS CALLED FOR BY THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMM
LABOR UNIONS HAVE ALSO COME OUT WITH ALTERNATIVES TO THE

GOVERNMENT'S PLAN.

3. IN ADDITION TO THE MAJOR STRUGGLE OVER THE 1979 BUDGET AND THE MULTI-YEAR ECONOMY PLAN (SPECIFICATION '81), OTHER ISSUES MAY ALSO PROVOKE STRONG OPPOSITION FROM VARIOUS GROUPS. ABORTION, LAND POLICY, GOVERNMENT-FINANCED HOUSING, AND ILLEGAL WORKERS ARE ALL ISSUES WHICH CONTAIN POLITICAL DYNAMITE AND ON WHICH WE CAN EXPECT PARLIAMENTARY STRUGGLES TO DEVELOP. HOWEVER, THE FOCUS IS CLEARLY ON THE GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET AND ECONOMY PLAN. THE SUCCESS OF THE VAN AGT GOVERNMENT IN SELLING ITS ECONOMIC PROPOSALS TO PARLIAMENT AND THE LABOR UNIONS WILL BE THE MAJOR INDICATOR OF THE STRENGTH IT WILL HAVE IN DEALING WITH THE BROAD RANGE OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IT FACES AND INDEED A GOOD INDICATOR OF WHETHER THAT GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO STAY ITS THREE YEAR COURSE. AT THIS WRITING THE BETTING APPEARS TO BE THAT IT WILL SURVIVE, ALBEIT WITH SOMETHING LESS THAN THE TEN BILLION GUILDER SQUEEZE-OUT IT IS HOPING FOR.
JOSEPH

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